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Hello, this is Rebecca Humphries, the director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Governor Jennifer Granholm asked me to provide a radio address this week about the late fall ritual in our state that brings hundreds of thousands of outdoorsmen and women into the woods, and puts millions of dollars into our state's economy.

Firearm deer season started this week, and nearly everyone in Michigan knows someone who is out trying to bag a buck. What many Michigan citizens do not know is that deer hunting is a significant part of our state's economy.

Deer hunting in Michigan is big business. An expected 725,000 individuals will purchase at least one deer license this year. Hunters will spend more than 10 million days enjoying deer hunting and recreation during the archery, firearm, and muzzle loading seasons combined. This year, deer hunters will spend more than \$500 million for food, lodging, transportation and equipment to pursue deer in Michigan.

Our DNR biologists are predicting another strong hunting season this year, with more than 400,000 deer expected to be taken.

Deer hunting in our state is a part of our rich natural heritage. For more than 100 years, Michigan hunters have enjoyed deer hunting. The license fees that our hunters pay out are put right back into the wildlife and habitat conservation projects that the DNR works on every day in our state.

Thanks to Governor Granholm, we will be able to ensure that the next generation of conservationists is being introduced to the sport. The Governor signed two important new laws this year for hunting. First, she signed a law that lowers the hunting age for bear, elk and deer seasons. She also signed a law that creates an apprentice hunting program to pair novice hunters with more experienced ones so they can build their outdoor skills and develop an appreciation for Michigan's great outdoors. This program is aimed at adults who might have an opportunity to hunt with a parent or grandparent while growing up.

Hunting is an important wildlife management tool and recreational opportunity. On behalf of myself and Governor Granholm, I wish you a safe and successful hunting season. And I hope to see you at one of our highway deer check stations.